

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 were pending in the above-captioned application when the present Office Action was mailed (December 20, 2005). In this response, claim 2 has been cancelled, and claims 1 and 3-5 have been amended. Accordingly, claims 1 and 3-13 remain pending.

In the December 20, 2005 Office Action, several of the claims were indicated to be allowable if rewritten to be in independent form, and the remaining claims were rejected. More specifically, the status of the application in light of the December 20 Office Action is as follows:

(A) Claims 1, 8, 10, 12 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,850,440 to Smet ("Smet");

(B) Claims 10-12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smet in view of PCT application WO 97/21900 to Trueman et al. ("Trueman"); and

(C) Claims 2-7 and 9 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten to be in independent form.

A. Response to the Section 102 Rejections

Without commenting on or conceding the merits of the rejection of claim 1, claim 1 has been amended to include the features of claim 2. As noted above, claim 2 was indicated to be allowable if rewritten to be in independent form. Accordingly, the Section 102 rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn.

Claims 8, 10, 12 and 13 all depend from claim 1. Accordingly, the Section 102 rejections of these claims should be withdrawn for the foregoing reasons and for the additional features of these claims.

B. Response to the Section 103 Rejection

Claims 10-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) being unpatentable over Smet in view of Trueman. Claims 10-12 depend from claim 1, which, as discussed above, is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, without commenting on or conceding the merits of the rejections of claims 10-12, the Section 103 rejections of these dependent claims should be withdrawn for the foregoing reasons and for the additional features of these claims.

C. Response to the Indication of Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 2-7 and 9 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten to be in independent form. The elements of claim 2 have been incorporated into claim 1 and claim 2 has been cancelled. Accordingly, the objection to claim 2 is now moot. Claim 3 has been amended to depend from claim 1, claim 4 has been amended to depend from claim 3, and claim 5 has been amended to clarify the last element of the claim, without narrowing the scope of the claim. Claims 3-7 and 9 all depend from allowable claim 1 and accordingly, the objections to these claims should be withdrawn.

D. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, applicants believe that the pending application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner discovers any informalities or other matters that may be expediently handled by a telephone conference, he is encourage to contact the undersigned attorney at (206) 359-3257.

Dated:

Respectfully submitted,

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